setting up of bio-fertilizers production units under "National Product on Development and Use of Bio-fertilizers" during the IXth Plan and 2002-03. The scheme has been subsumed under a new Central Sector Scheme "National Project on Organic Farming" from October 2004. Under the new scheme credit linked back ended subsidy is provided for setting up bio-fertilizer production units @ 25% of the project cost up to a maximum of Rs. 20.00 lakh through National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) and National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed efficient strains of microbes which improve soil either by way of fixing nitrogen or by mobilizing soil nutrients like phosphorous, zinc etc. under Network Project on Bio-fertilizers. In order to create awareness about the use of bio-fertilizers among the farmers, training and demonstrations are arranged from time to time through State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and ICAR Institutes.

Enhancing procurement of wheat

†*199. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been less procurement of wheat by Government in the country than its requirement during the year 2005-06;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) whether it is also fact that the quantity of Government procurement of wheat could be enhanced by further increasing its purchase-price;

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(e) the reasons for not taking measures by Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The procurement of wheat for crop year 2005-06 (to be marketed in Rabi marketing Season

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(RMS) 2006-07) was 92.26 lakh tonnes against the estimate of 162 lakh tonnes. The low level of procurement of wheat in RMS 2006-07 was on account of high ruling market prices, lower than the targeted production of wheat in crop year 2005-06, negative market sentiments, low market arrivals and more active participation by private traders.

(c) to (e) Keeping in view the low trend in procurement of wheat, the Government announced an incentive bonus of Rs. 50 per quintal higher than the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of Rs. 650 per quintal on 21st April, 2006. However, inspite of this incentive bonus, the Government was not able to procure the required quantity of wheat from the domestic market and it was decided to meet the deficit through imports.

Surrender of posts relating to safety

*200. SHRIMATI N. P. DURGA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons that various divisions of the indian Railways have surrendered 1.90 lakh posts beloning to safety category between 2001 and 2006;

(b) whether it is also a fact that 500 posts again belonging to safety category have been surrendered in Vijayawada Division alone during the last five years;

(c) if so, whether it would not affect the safety of the Railways which is being criticized due to a lot of accidents and put more pressure on the existing staff which hinders their efficiency; and

(d) looking at the whole scenario, whether Government are considering to avoid surrendering of posts and fill up the posts of important categories like safety?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) and (b) The overall sanctioned strength of safety categories in Indian Railways has increased over the period 2001 to 2006 by about 30% Posts belonging to safety categories have been surrendered in Vijayawada Division due to introduction of panel interlocking system, work-study and other technological inputs.